

WASHINGTON

THURSDAY, JULY 9, 1863.

THE DEFEAT OF GEN. LEE.

We need not direct the attention of our readers to the continuation of the narrative we to-day give respecting the recent terrible battles in the State of Pennsylvania. The military operations in this State have for the last few days held the whole country in breathless suspense, because of the magnitude of the issues depending on the uncertain arbitrament of the bloody wagers to which they were submitted in the eyes of the nation. It was generally felt that the complexion of the future would be largely determined by the result of the battles that must ensue from the daring invasion of Gen. Lee, and the recognized skill of that officer conspired, with other considerations which we need not enumerate, to create the liveliest solicitude in the breasts of all.

The war-cloud that lowered so portentously over the land has now spent its fury, and, after a struggle of unprecedented ferocity, the army of Gen. Lee, with diminished ranks and shattered columns, is endeavoring to effect its retreat into Virginia. The valor of the brave Army of the Potomac, so often proved before on many an ensanguined field, has been again most signally illustrated, and crowned with a success which sheds a lustre equally on it and on the new leader, who was called under circumstances of such intermingled opportunity and difficulty to give the first evidences of his skill and energy as the commander of a great army.

The saddest thing in war is a great defeat, and the next saddest thing is a great victory, for the voice of weeping, lamentation, and woe over those lost to country and friends mingles alike with the shouts of the victors and the cries of the vanquished. Nor is it possible in a war like this—*bellum plusquam civile*—to forget, in the sight of every stricken battle-field, that victor and vanquished, with all who fall or suffer in the ranks of one or the other, are brethren, made rather to respect and love one another than to delight in the unnatural strife which has placed in their hands the weapons of mutual destruction. Let us hope that the bloody drama whose swelling scenes are now passing before the eyes of the nation may soon approach its denouement.

THE CONWAY CORRESPONDENCE.

We published, a few days ago, the correspondence which has recently been had in London between the Rev. MONCURE D. CONWAY, who represents himself as an agent of "the leading Abolitionists of America," and the Hon. JAMES M. MARION, the Commissioner of the Confederate States. In his opening letter, Mr. Conway, it will be remembered, made the following proposition:

"If the States calling themselves 'the Confederate States of America' will consent to emancipate the negro slaves in those States, such emancipation to be guaranteed by a liberal European commission, the emancipation to be inaugurated at once, and such time to be allowed for its completion as the commission shall judge to be necessary and just, and such emancipation once made to be irrevocable—then the abolitionist and anti-slavery leaders of the Northern States shall immediately oppose the prosecution of the war on the part of the United States Government, and, since they hold the balance of power, will certainly cause the war to cease by the immediate withdrawal of every kind of support from it."

We know nothing of the auspices under which Mr. Conway has made his appearance in London. That he had no credentials by which to authenticate his representative character, or to certify the nature of his mission, was sufficiently proved by the fact that, when interrogated on these points by Mr. Mason, he had no other reply to make than the following:

"I could easily give you the evidence that I represent the views of the leading Abolitionists of America, but with regard to the special offer which I have made I have concluded that it was best to write out to America and obtain the evidence of my right to make it in a form which will preclude any doubt as to its sufficiency."

Those who know Mr. Conway (and he is well known in this city, from his former residence among us) will readily perceive the source of the error into which he has fallen. Giving to his anti-slavery ideas a preponderance which disqualifies him for the formation of well-balanced and judicious determinations in matters concerning the supposed welfare of the slave, he avows his readiness to sacrifice all other political interests and principles affecting the welfare and integrity of the United States provided emancipation can be attained. This latter is with him the paramount consideration. Similar views, the offspring of the same inspirations, have been announced by Mr. Wendell Phillips, of Boston, and by the Hon. Martin P. Conway, a member of the last House of Representatives from the State of Kansas. How widely the same sentiment prevails among this class of politicians we are unable to say, but are inclined to doubt whether Mr. Conway will be able to find many among his friends who are ready to endorse his proposition.

It is not to be presumed that this proposition was made by him with any criminal intent, however injudicious it may have been, and however obviously it falls under the pains and penalties denounced by a statute of the last Congress, framed and introduced by Mr. Senator Sumner. It is known that the Fifth Congress of the United States, by an act passed on the 30th of January, 1799, prohibited all correspondence and intercourse, verbal or in writing, direct or indirect, by any citizen, at home or abroad, with any officer or agent of, or any person sympathizing with a "foreign Government," with a view to change, modify, or thwart the measures of the United States. As this act in terms related only to a "foreign Government," it was doubtful whether it could be made to apply to the case of a citizen corresponding or communicating with the insurgent authorities at Richmond or their representatives abroad, and in order to discourage all such volunteer and irregular diplomacy, the last Congress passed an act applying the prohibitions and penalties of the old law to those who should hold intercourse with "the present pretended rebel government," or any of its officers, agents, or sympathizers, "with intent to defeat the measures of the United States Government, or to weaken in any way their efficacy." The proposition

of the last Congress infringed by Mr. Conway is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That if any person, being a resident of the United States, or being a citizen thereof, and residing in any foreign country, shall, without the permission or authority of the Government of the United States, and with the intent to defeat the measures of the said Government, or to weaken in any way their efficacy, hold or commence, directly or indirectly, any correspondence or intercourse, written or verbal, with the present pretended rebel Government, or with any officer or agent thereof, or with any other individual acting or sympathizing therewith; or if any such person above mentioned, not duly authorized, shall counsel or aid in any such correspondence or intercourse, with intent as aforesaid, he shall be deemed guilty of a high misdemeanor, and on conviction before any court of the United States having jurisdiction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding ten thousand dollars, and by imprisonment not less than six months nor exceeding five years.

The "conversations" had with Lord Lyons in New York by some of the "conservative leaders," as reported by him to Earl Russell, after the last October elections, gave, it is known, great umbrage to some of our citizens, who supposed themselves to see in the fact and matter of such conversations the evidence of disloyal designs sufficient to impeach the patriotism of a large mass of their countrymen.

It remains to be seen whether the persons who were then so swift to level their denunciations at assumed political offenders, will be equally prompt and jealous and suspicious in questioning the loyalty of the parties for whom Mr. Conway assumes to speak in offering to postpone the cause of the Union to the cause of emancipation.

The New York Commercial Advertiser, an Administration journal, comments on "the Conway correspondence" in the following terms:

"No sooner is this correspondence made public here than the Abolitionists seek to repudiate it. The Tribune denounces Mr. Conway, and Mr. Garrison, whose name has been mentioned in connection with the affair, says that the Abolitionists with whom he is identified have not been guilty of the folly and presumption of authorizing any such proposition, and that Mr. Conway, who is in England on his own responsibility, will have no forgiveness from them. It is not to be disguised that the incoherent speech of some leaders of abolition thought have produced an impression that the abolitionists are willing to sacrifice the Union to slavery, and to cease peace and disunion, provided only the peculiar institution can be abolished. This is a charge which is held by very few indeed, but as many are suspected of faith in this fatal and treasonable heresy, it is perhaps well that an opportunity is given them to disclaim all connection with these plotters of disunion. These are times when it is important to know precisely where the stand. Copperheads may just as well under the shadow of the Tabernacle as within the precincts of the Capitol."

"The folly of the proposition made by this self-sufficient envoy is evident from the fact that he promises to 'cause the war to cease by the immediate withdrawal of every kind of support from it.' It is not to be disguised that the actual presence in the field, Mr. Conway and his friends have never very abundantly yielded to the war, and as to 'material aid,' that is already provided for another year. Congress having made the necessary appropriations. Mr. Conway's 'peace party' is hardly strong enough to next Congress to give them much hope of a repeal of the legislation on this subject."

"There has been far too much of this self-constituted diplomacy in this war, and it is time a stop was put to it by the strong hand of the law. Many were clamorous last winter for the punishment of those who had made peace propositions to the Richmond powers, and no language was too severe to be applied to them. The public judgment was right in making the demand. The difficulty was, that no case was made out. Propositions and plans were sent forth, but no one was willing to stand sponsor for them. But here is a proposition and an author, and the two together make up a case for a grand jury."

A PROPOSED CONFEDERATE MISSION.

Some notice of the incident related below having found its way into the New York papers, we have enabled ourselves to communicate to our readers a correct and authoritative statement of the affair. We were already in possession of some intimation of the transaction, but did not think proper to make any allusion to it until more accurately informed and feeling authorized to make it public.

On Sunday, the 5th instant, the Secretary of War received a despatch from Col. Ludlow, the United States Commissioner for exchange of prisoners of war, attached to the staff of Major Gen. Dix, commander of the Department of Virginia, to the effect that "Alexander H. Stephens, Military Commissioner for the Confederate States," had presented himself in a "Confederate" steamer under a flag of truce, and stated to Col. Ludlow that he was the bearer of a communication in writing from "Jefferson Davis, commander-in-chief of the land and naval forces of the Confederate States of America," to "Abraham Lincoln, commander-in-chief of the land and naval forces of the United States of America," and that he desired to proceed in the same Confederate steamer to Washington to deliver the said communication, attended only by Robert Ould, as secretary, for the purpose of conferring upon the subjects of the aforesaid communication, and the officers and crew of the steamer. The Secretary of the Navy on the same day received a similar despatch from Acting Rear Admiral Lee, in command of the United States Squadron in Hampton Roads.

On Monday the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy respectively answered Colonel Ludlow and Rear Admiral Lee, that "The request of Alexander H. Stephens is inadmissible. The customary agents and channels are adequate for all needful military communication and conference between the United States forces and the insurgents."

IMPORTANT ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATIONS.

The annual visitation of the English Royal Observatory was made on the 6th of June. Professor AIRY, in his report of his proceedings, says that he has commenced a series of observations on star spectra—a branch of physical inquiry which of late has attracted great general interest, and which may yet lead to most important results. He says, also, that from observations of the planet Mars, compared with other observations made in Australia, a value of the solar parallax has been obtained "exceeding the received value by about 1-24th part." This shows the earth to be nearer the sun by several millions of miles than has been supposed, and independent investigations made of late by other astronomers have led to the same result. It is also mentioned in the report that a new determination of the direction of movement of the solar system in space has been made, taking into account a very large number of stars, (above one thousand), the result of which investigation supports the deductions already obtained by other astronomers.

MOVEMENT ON THE PENINSULA.

FORTRESS MONROE, JULY 7.—Advices from White House say that on the 1st Gen. Getty, with 10,000 men, proceeded from that point for the purpose of destroying the remaining bridges over the South Anna. Passing through King William C. H., Brandywine, and Fayetteville, he crossed the Pamunkey and met a large force of rebels near the bridge, and was unable to accomplish his object. He was then obliged to retreat, and was followed by five or six miles, and destroyed a depot, capturing a few prisoners. There was some slight skirmishing, and Gen. Getty returned this morning to White House.

OUR SECOND EDUCATION.

Nothing is more certain than that the outbreak of the present war found the people of the United States less imbued with the principles and even less familiar with the provisions of the Constitution than were their predecessors at any former period in the history of the country.

The generation contemporaneous with the formation of the Constitution, partaking as they did in the discussions which every where preceded and attended its adoption, were not only profoundly impressed with the value but also deeply indoctrinated in the principles of that great instrument, which it had taxed the highest wisdom of our fathers to frame.

After the Constitution had been ratified by the States and the National Government had been reared on its present basis, a great part of the political activity of the country was spent for many years in the discussion of purely constitutional questions which were raised by the practical operations of the Government under its new charter. The powers, scope, application, and limitations of the powers granted by the Constitution furnished for a long period the chief subjects of partisan division and debate, until at last "construction construed" had nearly spent its force, and the instrument, in all its essential features, gradually took on a definite "form and pressure," resulting from established precedents in the administration of affairs.

To this age of constitutional interpretation succeeded the period of administrative measures, based mainly on considerations of political economy, and expressing the different views which obtained among different denominations of men with regard to certain leading questions of public expediency. Constitutional questions continued, it is true, to be warmly discussed in connection with these measures, but it was evident that men differed more from the force of a conceived divergence of interests than from a simple diversity of opinion as to the true meaning of the Constitution.

This supposed divergence of interests led to the formation of parties, organized for the assertion no longer of mere theoretical principles but of material wants, implicating first the cupidities and then the passions of their respective adherents. All that was selfish in human nature gradually conspired with all that was vindictive to give to our political contests a ferocity which rendered men as insensible to the teachings of the Constitution as they were deaf to the voice of reason. This was the period of organized politics—when politics were pursued as a trade, and when the retainers of party could be led captive at the will of demagogues, every where appealing to the grosser instincts and prejudices of their respective followers—until in the end this *civium ardor prava jubentium* degenerated into a sectional wrangle whose din and discord drowned every other appeal.

Amid such excited disputations the Constitution had but little chance to be heard on the one side or the other, and men showed only too significantly that they heeded but little its injunctions. There was a noise of political riot in the land long before the sounds of cannon brought the nation to its feet in a struggle with armed sedition, which latter was the culmination of a growing disregard for the Constitution of the country. The people, thus led into political captivity, forgot the language and the laws of the fathers. They spoke in a strange speech of hatred and passion, and they trampled on the rights guaranteed by the ancestral covenants. This alienation has finally brought us into the depths of our present troubles and distresses.

But the very extremity of the evils under which we now suffer is causing men every where to ponder the paths they have been treading, and day by day it grows only more and more clear that our only safety is to be found in returning to the traditions from which we have, as a nation, apostatized. We must return to the first principles of the Government—to a respect for law and order as the basis of respect for each other's rights and immunities. The law is the bond of peace as it is the bond of union, and we must be re-educated in the precepts of law and restored to acquiescence in its sanctions. So Ezra read afresh to the Jewish people, after the return from captivity, the "words of the law," which had fallen into forgetfulness among them while they dwelt in the strange land into which they had been led only because of their unfaithfulness to the teachings of their Divine Legislator.

We are to-day learners in a hard school, but the whole nation will profit in the sequel by the lessons it is receiving in the fires of adversity, and as it becomes more and more imbued with that wisdom whose ways are ways of pleasantness and whose paths are paths of peace, it will more and more return to the spirit and temper of the fathers from whose example it has so widely departed.

We have been reminded of this encouraging prospect—a bright outlook from the darkness that now envelops the land—by the following reflections of Governor Seymour, of New York, as contained in a speech delivered by him on the Fourth of July. He said:

"I am one of those who are full of hope for the future. Not that I underestimate the dangers which threaten us; not that I do not deplore as much as any living man can the terrible ravages of this war. But why does war rage in our land? It is because the people of our generation have lost the virtues and patriotism of our fathers. It is because we have become indifferent to those great truths which we have now laid before us, as if they were curiosities in legal literature, instead of being great truths. We are to-day imbued upon the heart and mind of every American. I tell you why I am full of hope that not only will our liberties be maintained, our nation restored, and order once again prevail over this great land of ours. It is this: Examine yourself, and I ask you how many men there are within the sound of my voice who know twenty months ago what the Constitution of their country was. I do not say that you did not understand it intellectually; I do not mean to say that it was not imprinted upon your memory; I do not mean to say that it had not received your assent; but it was not until we were made to feel, as our fathers felt, the value of their Declaration they had put forth, that any of us could ever see the full value and significance of the Constitution of our country and the Declaration of Independence. We have accepted it, as I said, mentally and intellectually, before; but why was it, when these familiar words sounded again in your ears on this occasion, as you have heard them often before on the anniversary of our country's liberty, that they stirred your very hearts within you and made your blood tingle in your veins?"

"My friends, we have not now a mere intellectual knowledge of the Constitution—we do not give it now a mere mental support. We are to-day imbued upon the heart and mind of every American. I tell you why I am full of hope that not only will our liberties be maintained, our nation restored, and order once again prevail over this great land of ours. It is this: Examine yourself, and I ask you how many men there are within the sound of my voice who know twenty months ago what the Constitution of their country was. I do not say that you did not understand it intellectually; I do not mean to say that it was not imprinted upon your memory; I do not mean to say that it had not received your assent; but it was not until we were made to feel, as our fathers felt, the value of their Declaration they had put forth, that any of us could ever see the full value and significance of the Constitution of our country and the Declaration of Independence. We have accepted it, as I said, mentally and intellectually, before; but why was it, when these familiar words sounded again in your ears on this occasion, as you have heard them often before on the anniversary of our country's liberty, that they stirred your very hearts within you and made your blood tingle in your veins?"

place fanaticism, for the great principles of liberty and fanaticism in their determination to see that those rights and liberties are established. We have seen in our land small parties, each an inconsiderable minority in the section of country where they existed, but men of purpose, men of real sense and fanaticism. We have seen them wage a war upon the Constitution of your country with a persistence and power that have, at last, shaken it to its very foundation, and brought us to-day to the very brink of national ruin. We have seen what zeal and purpose could do when it was opposed only by dull mental acquiescence in great truths. What may we not expect when we are not to do when the great majority of the American people have a fervent longing and vital faith in these principles which you have heard and read, and who propose to maintain them every day of their lives?"

"Do you wish for peace? Do you wish for victory? Do you wish for the restoration of our national privileges? Here lies the pathway, and let the American people once learn the full value of their liberties, as our fathers did, and the battle is fought and won. Without this, my friends, we can bring you no success—peace can give you no quiet until the American people are thus educated and elevated, and I believe they are rapidly becoming educated and elevated. Until that takes place war or peace is the mere accident of the great underlying causes of convulsion which have shaken our institutions and shaken our very core. Remember this, that the great underlying cause of this war, I care not what particular application you may give to it, what your special views may be, but you must admit to me, one special cause or another special cause, but there is a great underlying general cause, which must be removed before it can be restored, and that cause was indifference to our rights, indifference to our liberties, and want of proper intelligence with regard to our own country, and want of an elevated wisdom that could understand the duties of American citizenship. When you have gained this, peace will be restored; when you have gained this, all the world can see that we have gone back to the wisdom of our fathers, and that we are again sustaining institutions that invited the whole world to their overthrow and destruction—until that takes place, but three short years ago, the most glorious nation on the face of the earth. When we have again restored that virtue and that intelligence, our country will again be restored to its former greatness and to its former glory. But my friends, let us do our duty cheerfully, promptly, and faithfully. Let us demand our rights resolutely and firmly, in all their fullness. He who fails to do his duty is untrue to his country. He who fails to demand his rights is false to the principles of liberty and of freedom."

"Let us resolve, upon this sacred day, that we will hereafter stand by the Constitution of the country, the power of the Government, and the rights of the States, as the citizens of the United States, and as the members of the Judiciary. Whatever others may do, let us show ourselves obedient and respectful to the authorities acting within the limits of their constitutional jurisdictions, and at the same time show ourselves resolute in the maintenance of our own rights. Let us do our duty and demand our rights. Let us demand our rights cheerfully, promptly, and faithfully. Let us demand our rights resolutely and firmly, in all their fullness. He who fails to do his duty is untrue to his country. He who fails to demand his rights is false to the principles of liberty and of freedom."

"REUNION BY EXPANSION."

Mr. Elihu Burritt, popularly known as "the Learned Blacksmith," and who it seems is now sojourning in London, has recently propounded from that city a plan for the termination of the present war and for a "re-annexation" of the Seceded States to the American Union, no longer, however, as integral members of that Union, after the manner of the Loyal States, but as a distinct political community, to be joined with Canada and Mexico in forming around the Federal Government a "Nation's Union," embracing them all in a limited political fellowship.

It would be difficult to conceive of a scheme more ideal or impracticable than this, and yet it is gravely promulgated by its author as affording "a solution" of the American problem. He invites for it the "thoughtful attention" of American readers, and expresses the conviction that many of them may be prepared, by the experiences of the last two years, and by the aspects of that future that seems to threaten us, to give more serious consideration to this plan "of restoring peace and of reconstructing the Union, not only as it was, but such as multitudes of all sections aspired to see it in the old days of American patriotism and prosperity."

In order to exhibit in its full proportion the amiable delusion under which Mr. Burritt labors in proposing such an impossible plan, we cite its leading features, as sketched by him, in the following terms:

"The solution of this tremendous crisis, which I would 'essentially' propose, is this: That we concede to the Confederate States the same footing on which we would readily admit into union with us the Mexican Republic and the British provinces; that we concede to them their own Congress, and all those prerogatives of group legislation which might be exercised without impairing the united action and attitude of the United Nations of America towards foreign Powers. This relationship the Confederate States would doubtless readily and gladly accept. They would be worth as much to us as that relationship which we have now, and which we would immediately before their rebellion. It will be only twisting the words of our own Constitution to suit our purpose, and to give us into one national law, retaining all their strength. It will be a nominal reinstatement of that independence which we have now, and which we would immediately before their rebellion. 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